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South Korea Research

**Landforms and Climates:**

The seas to the east, west and south of Korea are the Sea of Japan, the Yellow Sea Korea Strait, respectively. There are 3,000 islands from the south and west coast. Cheju, home of the tallest mountain (6398 ft) in Korea is on the south and Ullung is to the east. The border between north and south Korea is a path on the 38 parallel and the land south of that is mostly mountainous with some low areas situated mainly on the craggy western coast where there is extreme high and low tides and few beaches. The lowland plains of the west include the Han, Pyongtaek and Kum in the North, and the Yongsan and Honam in the south. The mountains in the interior of Korea begin with the Taebaek Mountains that are located in the north east of Korea and which branch out into many mountain ranges that mostly run south, such as the large Soebaek mountains that include Mount Chiri (6,283 ft). The three major rivers Kum, Naktong and Han, originate near the Taebaek Mountains, but the Kum and Han flow into the Yellow Sea while the Naktong continues into the Korean Strait. South Korea’s climate has four obvious seasons with extreme summer and winters and mild spring and falls. Most of the 35-60 inch precipitation from being in the East Asian Monsoon Belt arrives between June and September, while typhoons may occur in the late summer. The north is much colder than the south.

**Natural Resources and Agriculture:**

Although South Korea has the largest deposit of graphite and tungsten (mined in Sang-Dong) in the world, their mineral resources are limited as in addition they only really have silver, gold (mined in South Cholla) and lead deposits. Only very small amounts of various other minerals are mined. Only 10% of Korea’s oil and coal resources are located in South Korea, and so the South Korean government imports a lot of oil – mostly from the Persian Gulf – and tries to use other methods of energy such as natural gas, and – mostly – renewable energy sources, such as hydropower from the Han River or solar power. The building of tidal and wind power plants is being planned. Agriculture does not play a very major role in South Korea, and composes only 4% of the GDP. Less than one quarter of the land is used for crop cultivation, in part due to the fact that the mountainous landscape makes less land arable. 60% of the land is used to grow rice. Logging is restricted to Kangwon and North Kyongsang, and most of the wood is imported to meet demand, although reforestation programs are yielding successful results. The fishing in Ulsan and Masan allows Korea to be a leader in the fishing industry.

**Environment:**

There are more than 4,500 plant species in South Korea, however many areas of forests have disappeared due to the need to for energy during the war – creating a large demand for timber. This demand has been curbed since coal was introduced, but the burning of fossil fuels has caused its own environmental problems as it emits many harmful greenhouse gases. This air pollution, along with acid rain and water pollution from waste are the most pressing environmental issues in Korea, along with how the rivers are being diverted to irrigate rice fields. Of the areas of forest that are left, those in the north and central regions consist of oak, elm, alder, maple, birch, pine, aspen, and spruce, while the warm southern regions consist of broad leaved evergreens. Most of these areas are now under government protection against deforestation, and the deforested areas are undergoing successful reforestation efforts. The native animals are similar to southern Manchuria, central China, and Japan (black bears, river deer, mandarin voles, ring necked pheasants, and small mammals are common to this area). The newly industrialized economy created large cities and necessitated the building of more infrastructures. Of the 46 million people living in Korea ¾ live in big cities, though the overall population is declining. Korea is a part of many international agreements to help the environment including the Kyoto Protocol.

**Facts and Figures:**

Population: 48,508,972 (2009)

World Population Rank: 25th (2009)

Economic Aid Extended: $334,000,000 (2003)

Illiteracy: 2%